

A Newsletter For Information Services *Issue Number 10 • December 2001*

FROM THE VC'S DESK



As we forge ahead into the present millennium, there are several bold steps we have to take in sustaining the use of IT in our learning and work environments. Some of these steps require a review of our existing policies on IT and our current practices in implementing IT to support teaching-learning and management. First, how pervasive is IT use in Unimas? Have we reached our target goal of making every Unimas student and employee IT literate? How can we improve the modules that imparts IT knowledge and skills to all? A second concern on pervasiveness is the issue of ethics. Have we complied with the Government regulations on copyrights? Are there illegal softwares resident or secretly used by Unimas users that may be detrimental to the university in the end. How can we prevent the non-ethical practice of irresponsible users.

In providing a better IT service to the Unimas community, we need feedback. A survey on specific applications such as Lotus Notes will be conducted so that we can gauge user's response. Perhaps we need a hotline where users can email their suggestions. These efforts require cooperation from both staff and students in realising our vision of an IT-based Unimas and our mission of becoming an exemplary university in IT implementation. The integration of CAIS-CNS and MIS as the Centre for Information Communications Technology Services (CICTS) is a step in the right direction. Under one umbrella, the needs of campus users can be dealt with appropriately and speedily.

The network for the present campus is being upgraded to gigabit ethernet. There could be disruptions to the service as we migrate from the existing system to the new one. As part and parcel of the IT discipline, we must be tolerant of inconveniences. I assure you the permanent campus that is presently being built will have better IT infrastructures in terms of network and connectivity so that we can ensure the campus needs are met from the start.

As a forward-looking University, we encourage the use of enabling technologies to support research. This year we have developed the first Virtual Reality Laboratory in Malaysia. We have also built a prototype of our knowledge portal that shall be the gateway to Unimas information. We organised SOLE2001 that displays IT in e-learning applications and CITA2001 that showcases recent developments in IT research and applications. We will continue to lead as envisaged in Unimas - Peneraju Keunggulan.

THE UNIMAS VIRTUAL REALITY LABORATORY IS REAL ... and here to stay

More Online Databases & Journals available to UNIMAS community! – page 2

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You may be curious by an awesome looking building next to the Undergraduate Academic Unit. This houses the Virtual Reality Laboratory - the first of its kind in Malaysia. The Laboratory is specially designed and dedicated to research and development (R&D) in virtual reality.

The term Virtual Reality (VR) was initially coined by Jaron Lanier, the founder of VPL Research in the USA. Other related terms include Artificial Reality, Cyberspace, and more recently, Virtual Worlds and Virtual Environments (VEs). Today, Virtual Reality is used in a variety of ways and often in a confusing and misleading manner. Originally, the term refers to 'Immersive Virtual Reality.' In immersive VR, the

user becomes fully immersed in an artificial, three-dimensional world that is completely generated by a computer. The Unimas VR suite includes the entire spectrum from desktop VR, to single wall and four-wall VEs.

Desktop virtual worlds typically are VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language) based environments. To date, there are two research projects that have investigated the utility of VRML VEs in collaborative decision making and concurrent engineering of product design. See <http://www.unimas.my/idea/unicave> and <http://www.unimas.my/idea/vcode>, respectively. Figure 1 shows an example of a VRML VE. This depicts the future CAIS in the permanent campus.

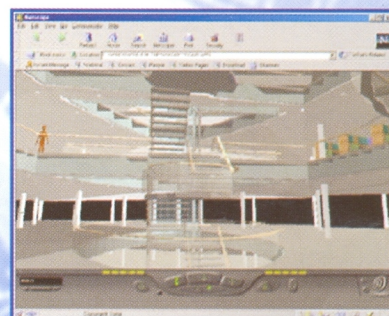
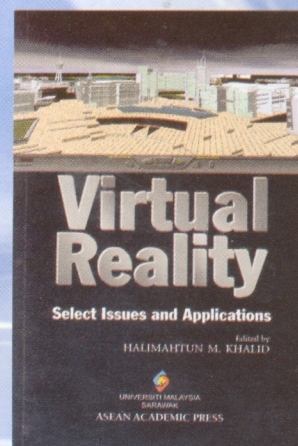


Figure 1. The CAIS in VRML Virtual Environment



For more highlights on the trend of VR, human factors issues and potential VR applications, read Virtual Reality - Select Issues and Applications, which is available at CAIS.

The VR Laboratory is made up of three related units as shown in Figures 2-4:

1. a Visualization Lab for modeling and simulation work;
 2. a Viewing Gallery for viewing the virtual world in a non-immersive virtual environment provided by a single wall projection system;
 3. a Cube for viewing the virtual world in a fully immersive environment created by four projection systems. This is often called a four-wall cave.
- Each unit showcases the best in VR technology from software, hardware to peripherals.



Figure 2. Visualization Lab



Figure 3. Viewing Gallery



Figure 4. The Unimas Cave

The main function of the Laboratory is to undertake R&D in the fields of virtual reality, and human interface development for applications ranging from scientific visualization, product design, manufacturing, architecture to human-computer interaction and telemedicine. This involves an inter-disciplinary approach to research. In addition, the Laboratory also offers consultancy services to industry and train academic and industry professionals on VR technology. The Laboratory is managed by a committee of seven academics, chaired by Professor Halimahtun, the Director of the Institute of Design and Ergonomics Application.

We hope to operationalise the Laboratory by the end of the year so that you too can visit and see it for REAL!

For further information, email mkmahtun@idea.unimas.my

CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC INFORMATION SERVICES (CAIS) – UPDATES

CAIS Online Public Access Catalog (EasyPAC) on the WEB.

The catalog can be accessed via CAIS homepage at the following URL :

<http://www.unimas.my/cais/> or by typing the following URL:

<http://cais-vtls.unimas.my/vtls/english/index.html>

MORE ONLINE DATABASES AND JOURNALS!

The following *Online databases* can either be accessed via CAIS Homepage by clicking *CAIS Online databases* or by typing the URLs.

Engineering Information (Ei Village) Online

Ei Village can be accessed through the following URL address:

<http://www.ei.org/engineeringvillage2>

Engineering Village 2 provides instant access to the latest engineering research right on the desktop. It offers a powerful way to search across multiple databases, including Compendex (over 5 million engineering literature abstracts), engineering website abstracts, patents, and industry specs and standards

Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau (CAB) Abstracts Online

Access to the database is via the following URL address:

<http://202.185.27.4/cabi>

Women's Resources International

Access to Women's Resources International has been enabled via IP authentication. Free access are also given to 2 other databases : AIDSearch & Child Abuse, Child Welfare & Adoption .

To access the databases via NISC's BiblioLine service, use the "Subscribers" link located to the right of the BiblioLine Logo on the NISC Home Page at <http://www.nisc.com>

Users can also have a direct link to the databases by using the following URLs :

<http://biblioline.nisc.com/scripts/login.dll?BiblioLine&dbname=?/color><?smaller>QWRI>

<http://biblioline.nisc.com/scripts/login.dll?BiblioLine&dbname=QAID>

<http://biblioline.nisc.com/scripts/login.dll?BiblioLine&dbname=?/color><?smaller>QCAN>

Online Journals

Annual Review Inc.

<http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/biomedicalhome.dtl>

Oxford University Press

<http://www3.oup.co.uk/jnls/list/>

BMJ Publishing Group

<http://www.bmjournals.com/>

Elsevier Web Editions

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/web-editions>

Royal Society of Chemistry

<http://www.rsc.org/is/journals/current/ejs.htm>

CATCHWORD

<http://giorgio.catchword.com/vl=5642971/cl=25/nw=1/rpsv/realpage/contents.htm>

INGENTA

<http://www.ingenta.com/>

Association of American Medicine Colleges

<http://www.academicmedicine.org/>

American Association of Immunologists

<http://www.jimmunol.org/>

Nature Publishing Group

<http://www.nature.com/>

University of Chicago Press

<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/pub-alpha.html>

Society for Endocrinology

<http://journals.endocrinology.org/index.htm>

IWA Publishing

<http://www.iwaponline.com/wst/toc.htm>

American Medical Association

http://pubs.ama-assn.org/archive_home.html

Blackwell Science Ltd.

www.blackwell-synergy.com/

National Research Council Canada

http://www.nrc.ca/cgi-bin/cisti/journals/rp/rp2_jour_e

Society for General Microbiology

<http://vir.sgmjournals.org/>

Rockerfeller University Press

<http://www.jem.org/>

American Society for Microbiology

<http://www.journals.asm.org/>

American Chemical Society

<http://pubs.acs.org/about.html>

Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry

<http://etc.allenpress.com/entconline/?request=index-html>

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

<http://www.jbc.org/>

American Society of Civil Engineers

<http://www.pubs.asce.org/journals/jrns.html>

BIOMEDNET

<http://www.bmn.com/>

Business Monitor International Ltd.

<http://www.businessmonitor.com/monarc/>

American Geological Institute

<http://inet2.agiweb.org/agi/geotimes.html>